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FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS

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*In Memory of*

# FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS



*Born*

Rustburg, Virginia

January 20, 1888

*Entered into Rest*

Norfolk, Virginia

March 1, 1993

105 years of age

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Archives

CT

275


.R53

1993



MISS FRANCES PAYNE MURRELL  
Salutatorian of Lynchburg High School's  
Class of 1906, in the graduation dress she  
wore at Commencement on June 16, 1906

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*FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS*

*1978 · Age 90*

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*Record of Marriage*

*EVERINGHAM RICKARDS & FRANCES PAYNE MURRELL*

Richmond, Virginia



Commonwealth of Virginia  
Department of Health  
Division of Vital Records and Health Statistics  
Richmond, Virginia

DATE OF MARRIAGE: March 11, 1916

PLACE OF MARRIAGE: Campbell County, Virginia

	HUSBAND	WIFE
NAME:	Everingham Rickards	Frances Payne Murrell
RACE:	White	White
AGE:	44	28
SINGLE, WIDOWED, OR DIVORCED:	Single	Single
BIRTHPLACE:	Keokuk, Iowa	Campbell County, Virginia
RESIDENCE:	Norfolk, Virginia	
PARENTS:		Wm. M. and Flora S.
OCCUPATION:	Wholesale Lumber Dealer	
CEREMONY PERFORMED BY:	Geo. E. Booker	
REPORTED BY:	S.C. Goggin, Clerk of Circuit Court	
	Campbell County, Virginia, Line	29

This is to certify that this is a true and correct reproduction  
or abstract of the official record filed with the Virginia  
Department of Health, Richmond, Virginia.

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## OBITUARY

*The Virginian-Pilot and The Ledger Star*

Monday, April 12, 1993



### FRANCES M. RICKARDS

NORFOLK—Frances Murrell Rickards, 105, of the 7300 block of Glenroe Avenue, died March 1, 1993, in her home.

Mrs. Rickards was a native of Rustburg, Virginia. She was the widow of Everingham Rickards and was a member of The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Norfolk. She was a member of the Algonquin Garden Club, Norfolk Yacht and Country Club, Daughters of the Barons of Runnymede, American Association of University Women, and the National Society of Daughters of the American Revolution. She graduated from Sweet Briar College in 1910 and was honored as its oldest living alumna.

Survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Murrell Rickards Chadsey of New York City, New York; two grandchildren, Garrett Rickards Bowden of New York City and Sidney Lee Bowden of Dorset, Vermont; and two great-grandchildren, Austin and Tanner Bowden, both of Dorset.

A memorial service will be conducted at 11 am Friday, in The Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd by the Rev. Ross Wright. Burial will be at 12:30 pm Saturday in Spring Hill Cemetery, Lynchburg. Friends may join the family from 6:30 to 7:30 pm Thursday in H.D. Oliver Funeral Apartments, Norfolk.

The family requests that flowers be omitted and memorial contributions be made to the Episcopal Church of The Good Shepherd or Sweet Briar College.

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## MEMORIAL SERVICE

*in Thanksgiving for the Life of*

FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS

*given at*

The Church of The Good Shepherd

Norfolk, Virginia

Friday April 16, 1993

11:00 A.M.

The Reverend Ross McGowan Wright, Rector



## PSALM 46

God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and  
though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea;  
Though the waters thereof rage and swell, and though the  
mountains shake at the tempest of the same.

There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of  
God; the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most  
Highest.

God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed;  
God shall help her, and that right early.

Be still then, and know that I am God: I will be exalted  
among the nations, and I will be exalted in the earth.

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

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## HOMILY

We have gathered today to give thanks to God for the life of his servant, Frances Rickards. I believe that there are three themes about her life which point us to God and to heaven.

First, she was "old and full of years." That is the phrase which the scriptures use to describe someone who has lived a long and fruitful life: "old and full of years." In our culture, infatuated as it is with the cult of youth, people don't like to be called "old" anymore. We prefer "mature" as in the popular magazine *Modern Maturity* or *Senior Adults*. But in the Bible, to be called "old" is a compliment. To be "old and full of years" is a sign of God's favor. To be given the privilege of living a long and fruitful life is a sign of God's blessing. Gray hair is a mantle of God's blessing. And so Frances holds before us the Biblical ideal of being given many years to live a long and fruitful life.

Second, she loved music. People will remember Frances for the many different ways in which her life touched theirs. For the majority of the members of this parish, the point of contact was Christian music; and more specifically, the gift of the organ. Hundreds of parishioners who never met her or knew her have nevertheless been drawn closer to her and closer to God through singing.

Singing is the distinctive act of the Christian church. If you study the worship of the world's major religions, one of the striking things about Christian worship is the central role of singing. Christians sing. And when we sing—in sadness and in joy; in anxiety and in peace—we are saying: "Our God reigns!" We are saying that pain and suffering are not the last word, but that God's good plan is victorious.

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The Swiss theologian Karl Barth used to say that when the angels go about their task of praising God, they play only Bach. But when they gather together as a family, they play Mozart "and our dear Lord listens with special pleasure."

Whether it is Bach or Mozart doesn't really matter. What matters is that there is music in heaven. When Christians sing praises to God, heaven and earth meet. We are gathered with God and with the angels and with the company of Christian men and women who have gone on to glory—including Frances—and we sing with them.

Third, we've gathered for this memorial service on the week in which most of the world celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ to which this service points.

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even if he dies. He who lives and believes in me will never die." This service is a proclamation of God's victory over death. And it is an invitation for each of us to join in the resurrection life of Jesus Christ along with Frances and all those who have served the Lord faithfully and now see him face to face on another shore.

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## A WORD ABOUT OUR ORGAN

*A gift from Frances Murrell Rickards*

from *The Good Shepherd News*, November 27, 1988

presented as part of the Memorial Service program

The Rickards Memorial Organ is a gift which a grateful congregation acknowledges today: a gift made possible by Mrs. Everingham Rickards, whose son, killed in action in 1944, left a sum of money to be used for the building of a church organ. Mrs. Rickards multiplied the gift, making it possible for us to enter into contract with the Aeolian-Skinner Organ Company of Boston. Mr. G. Donald Harrison, head of the firm and builder of many of the most celebrated pipe organs, himself gave direction to the design and completion of ours. It is thus a magnificent memorial, one that will sing out through the many years to come, to the glory of God.

And so it did until it was decided to build a new church. When the former church was demolished, the Aeolian-Skinner Company was again contracted to remove the entire organ from the old church, transport it back to the factory in Boston and enlarge it somewhat to be installed in the new church. The company prescribed how the organ chambers should be planned, built and finished for the organ to speak forth at its best.

Upon completion of our present building, the organ was installed by the Aeolian-Skinner Company. The organ was a little more than twice the size of the original organ, but the same console was used since preparations had been made in the beginning for the organ to be enlarged. This instrument had served well, but time and temperature had

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taken their toll on the console and many of the original parts which were still in use after thirty-three years.

Once again Mrs. Rickards, her daughter, Mrs. Murrell Rickards Chadsey, and her two sons, Messrs. Garrett Rickards Bowden and Sidney Lee Bowden, came to the assistance of the church. A contract was made with the Temple Organ Company of St. Joseph, Missouri to refurbish and enlarge our instrument to a rather complete three-manual organ, or more than forty ranks and about 2,500 pipes. We have one of the very finest organs in the area. It is composed of many voices, colors and hues. It can speak in a soft whisper for meditative moments and can rise in a mighty crescendo to support the great moments of praise to God. We express our praise to God and give thanks to Frances Murrell Rickards, Murrell Rickards Chadsey, Garrett Rickards Bowden and Sidney Lee Bowden who have made it possible for Good Shepherd to enjoy such a fine instrument. "It is thus a magnificent memorial, one that will sing out through the many years to come, to the glory of God."

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*Service at the*

*FINAL RESTING PLACE*

*of*

FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS

Spring Hill Cemetery

Lynchburg, Virginia

Laid to Rest on April 17, 1993 at 12:30 pm



*HOMILY*

The Reverend Susan C Lehman

Chaplain, Sweet Briar College

In the name of God.

In Scripture we pray, show me the path of life. From the prayer tradition of the Psalmist to the wisdom writings in Proverbs, Holy Scripture declares: we are born to live a purpose-filled life...a life that unfolds along the path we walk; a life intended to disclose that as children of God, we bear the image of God.

We are gathered here today to commend Frances Murrell Rickards to rest. A rest well-earned, a life lived long and abundantly. Indeed, she is a woman who walked the path of life, a path that took her from her birthplace in Rustburg to childhood in Lynchburg, through her college years at Sweet Briar to the place she made her home in Norfolk.

On her life path she embraced the study of music and mathematics. She took a lively interest in history,

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genealogy, astronomy and gardening. She shared her life path with her husband, two children, beloved grandsons and great grandchildren.

Her life span covered more than a century. It is a marvel to think of the persons who crossed her path, people whose lives she touched, enriched...changed.

I am here with you today as Chaplain of Sweet Briar. With President Hill, we represent countless generations of college women who have reason to be grateful for her devotion to the life of the mind. Because of her vision and generosity, we are able to continue our work with young women.

She walked the path of life in a style and manner we would do well to follow: with integrity, loyalty, self-control and honor. She embodied the best of the human spirit: those fundamental, religious values in the formation of character that we tirelessly seek to foster in our young people of today. Integrity. Loyalty. Self-control. Honor. Qualities she made manifest in her devotion and dedication to her family, her friends, her church, her many interests and her life-long dedication to education.

Frances Murrell Rickards, a woman who bore gracefully the image of God.

Amen.

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## HALLEY'S COMET, THEN AND NOW

Letter to the Editor, *The Virginian-Pilot*

September 19, 1985



When I was a senior in the first graduating class of Sweet Briar College, I saw Halley's Comet on May 10, 1910. I had not heard about the comet's coming. The only newspaper was in the college library, and I had not been reading it because of having to study for final examinations. I was unaware of the great excitement and apprehension which the passing of the comet was causing in New York and other parts of the country where many feared its possible unknown effects.

My math teacher, who later taught astronomy, asked me that day to go with her to Sweet Briar House, the home of the president, to watch for the comet. At twilight we looked toward the western horizon and saw the long, bright white tail passing across the sky. I don't remember how long it was visible, but we watched until it was out of sight.

Surprisingly, there was little discussion afterward about the event. Perhaps the lack of any means of communication other than newspapers in the library may explain the apparent lack of interest in and knowledge of the comet.

Now, 75 years later, there is keen interest in and anticipation of the return of Halley's comet. I look forward eagerly to seeing it again.

—Frances M. Rickards

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*Frances Murrell Rickards*

## *A FEW FACTS ABOUT MY MOTHER*

by Murrell Rickards Chadsey, Class of 1944

*Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*

Summer 1985



My mother, Mrs. Everingham Rickards, whose maiden name was Frances Payne Murrell, was born on January 20, 1888 (the year of the great blizzard) in Rustburg, Virginia. She is the only daughter and third child of William McKendree Murrell and Flora Scott Murrell. Her father was the Commonwealth Attorney for Campbell County, Virginia. The family moved to Lynchburg when my mother was four years old.

One reason she wanted so much to attend Sweet Briar rather than be a day student at Randolph-Macon Woman's College was that she had two older brothers and two younger brothers and lived in a neighborhood where there were many boys. She fervently wanted to be with all girls at Sweet Briar College.

When she graduated from high school in Lynchburg in June of 1906, she was president of her class. She entered Sweet Briar that following fall. In college she majored in mathematics. She had taken piano lessons for seven or eight years before entering college. Her music teacher was so upset when she heard she was majoring in math instead of music that she threatened to come over to Sweet Briar and try to dissuade her from her unfortunate choice. But she

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stuck to math, and Dr. Eugenia Morenus who taught her math in her senior year in 1909 and 1910 became one of her best and life-long friends. Before Dr. Morenus died, my mother established a scholarship fund at Sweet Briar in her name.

She also established a second scholarship in memory of her husband, Everingham Rickards, and her son, Garrett Van Schaick Rickards. In January, 1984, the income from the two scholarship funds enabled six young women to receive very substantial grants totaling \$19,992.

In 1916 Frances married Everingham Rickards, a businessman in Norfolk, Virginia. She had one son, Garrett and one daughter, Murrell. Garrett was a captain in the 307th Infantry Regiment which, with the marines, invaded many of the Japanese-held islands in the Pacific in the second World War. Garrett was killed in the invasion of Okinawa. A \$50,000 scholarship was established in his name in the early 1980s at the Norfolk Academy, his former school. Murrell graduated in the class of 1944 from Sweet Briar and is now Mrs. Carl T. Chadsey, Jr., of New York City.

Frances has two grandsons by Murrell's first marriage, of whom she is very proud. Garrett Rickards Bowden, now thirty-four years of age, is in the commercial real estate business in New York City. Sidney Lee Bowden, thirty years old, is in the hotel business in Vermont. Both have A.B. and M.A. degrees in subjects relating to their fields.

My mother has said many times that the four years at Sweet Briar were the happiest of her life. I believe that those happy four years and all that they entailed gave her much of the strength that she needed to live to such an age. In her lifetime she experienced five wars (Cuban, World Wars I and II, Korean, and Vietnamese Wars), the terrible

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Depression beginning in 1929, the loss of her son in World War II just two years after the loss of her husband, and a widowhood of forty-three years to date. She saw the birth and development of the car, airplane, radio, television, computer and the myriad electronic inventions of today. She did not learn to drive a car until after she was married and had her first child. She continued to own and drive a car until she was ninety.

She has been, as the old saying goes, "a tough little pine nut!" She survived three major operations after she was 79 years old and then in her early nineties had two cataract operations. She still reads, watches TV and frequently goes with friends to the Norfolk Symphony concerts or occasionally an opera. She still flies to New York to spend Christmas with me and my family. This past Christmas for the first time she brought her nurse-companion with her. She has spent every Christmas with me since I was first married in 1948, even flying to Venezuela in 1966 when I was living there.

She lives in a comfortable apartment in Norfolk with beautiful views of the inland waterways. Keeping her astronomy globe and book (which Dr. Morenus gave her many years ago) near the window, she often studies the heavens and can identify many planets and stars. In 1986 she hopes to see Halley's Comet which she saw once before in 1910 while sitting on the steps of Sweet Briar House with Dr. Morenus.

Genealogy has been a lifelong interest (she claims descent from four governors of Virginia), and she is a member of the DAR and Daughters of the Runnymede. She also belongs to the American Association of University

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Women, the Algonquin Garden Club and the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church.

My mother has never been an emotional person but rather one of quiet courage and acceptance of the fact. This facet of her personality plus a conservative life style and good genes (her mother lived to 97 years) have contributed to her longevity. I believe that her abiding interest in her Alma Mater ever since 1906 has been and continues to be a great source of strength for her.

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*The Class of 1910*

## *A DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY*

*Sweet Briar Alumnae Magazine*

Summer 1985



Seventy-five years ago, in the spring of 1910, President Mary K. Benedict presented diplomas to Sweet Briar's first graduating class. The class had started in 1906 with 13 members; five persevered to complete the academic program. They were known as "The Big Five." Pioneers in their day as women earning college degrees, the five graduates were Anne Cumnock Miller, Louise Hooper Ewell, Annie Powell Hodges, Eugenia Griffin Burnett, and Frances Murrell Rickards.

At reunion this spring, Frances Murrell Rickards was honored as Sweet Briar's oldest living graduate, the last of "The Big Five." Mrs. Rickards was not able to attend her seventy-fifth reunion (although she did come five years ago for for her seventieth). Her daughter, Murrell Rickards Chadsey '44, has written a warm tribute to her mother which we have been given permission to publish in this issue.

In an interview in 1977, Mrs. Rickards recalled incidents of life at Sweet Briar in the early years:

Of the first president: "She was 32. Miss Benedict, of course, lived in Sweet Briar House. Every president we've ever had lived in the suite, you know, in West Wing, on the second floor. Doctor Whiteman and his wife live there now. Well, Miss Benedict, although she lived at Sweet Briar

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House, don't think she didn't keep up with everything that was going on in the dormitory, because she was over there every night after the lights went out and roamed around the halls and all the buildings and all the grounds, and you never knew where she was going to appear on the scene. Out of the blue she would appear. We didn't go to classes on Saturday. So we had very much time on our hands that day unless we were going to Lynchburg or some place else. So on Saturday morning, Claudine Hutter and Ally Henry, who was from Tazewell, and I decided we'd have a game of bridge. So we put up a table in the sitting room, the little sitting room of Gray Hall. Well, we put up the card table in there and got our chairs all around it, and were having a grand game, but suddenly in the door there was Miss Benedict, with her cane. "Girls, do you think this is a summer resort?" Well, that was the end of the bridge game. She thought we ought to be studying, not playing bridge."

Of Dr. Harley: "She taught hygiene...and I went to the first class. Everybody was supposed to get that class...when she told us at the end of the class that she was going to cut up a cat the next time, that finished me. I never went back...and they never found out. I graduated without taking hygiene. Isn't that lovely?"

On leaving Sweet Briar: "I stayed over for one day (after graduation). I had been the business manager of the Briar Patch, and I guess I had a little business. Anyway, I cried all the time I was packing my trunk. We had trunks in those days, you know. I'd put a layer of clothes and a layer of tears. And I'd say, "Well, they'll be mildewed when I get home."

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*Sweet Briar College*

## *75<sup>TH</sup> REUNION CELEBRATION CONVOCATION*

Remarks made by Ann M. Reams

May 25, 1985



Frances Murrell Rickards came from Lynchburg to this new school. I want to pay special tribute to her. She is the only one of the five still alive, and she wanted so much to come to the reunion. She has missed very few of her reunions in the 75 years since she graduated. She is now 97 years old, and her daughter, Murrell Rickards Chadsey '44 thought it might be better if she didn't come. Mrs. Rickards also taught, then moved to Norfolk after her marriage. She has served as fund agent for her class longer than anyone else has served in this capacity, and her class had a remarkable 100% record for years.

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*FRANCES MURRELL &  
HER BRIDESMAIDS*

1916

*Front:* Eugenia Griffen  
Adelaide Shockey

*Rear:* Claudine Hutter  
Dudley Powers  
Frances Murrell



*FRANCES PAYNE MURRELL*

1916 · Age 28

In Lynchburg, Virginia  
before her wedding



*FRANCES MURRELL RICKARDS*

1952 · Age 64

*GARRETT BOWDEN*

*MURRELL CHADSEY*

*LEE BOWDEN*

Daughter and grandsons  
of Frances Rickards · 1992 · Murrell's birthday celebration





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## ADDENDUM



In December of her 98th year (1986) Frances Rickards fell in her bedroom while dressing to attend a party. In so doing, she struck her head on a piece of furniture, and although seemingly all right at the time, she suffered a stroke the next day. From then until her death she was mentally and physically incapacitated although at times she had lucid moments. She was beautifully and compassionately cared for in her own home by her housekeeper-companion, Eloise Tillery, and her nurses.

On January 20, 1993 she celebrated her 105th birthday. There was an afternoon party planned by her daughter, Murrell, with birthday cake and champagne. The seven guests were contemporaries of Murrell, and all of them were daughters of her former friends who were then deceased. She was able to taste the refreshments and to thank her guests for coming. The night nurse said she slept better than usual that night!

At the end on March 1, 1993 there was no need for a doctor or a hospital. Frances Murrell Rickards died quietly holding her nurse's hand.

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